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AERIAL COERCION: WHY DID IT FAIL AGAINST SADDAM  
AND SUCCEED AGAINST SLOBODAN?

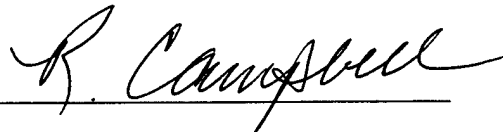
by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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## 15. Abstract:

As a result of air power played in Desert Storm and Operation Allied Force, a new term, aerial coercion has entered the military lexicon. Aerial coercion involves a major air operation to paralyze or decapitate an adversary using strikes against strategic targets like national level command and control sites, punish him by striking the state's economic infrastructure, or to deny his military strategy through strikes on operational targets like fielded forces. Its purpose is compelling an adversary to accept your demands.

As our national leadership turns increasingly to aerospace power as the preferred, low-risk military instrument of choice, they must understand what it can and cannot accomplish. In theory, a major air operation attacking the sat targets should compel any enemy. But why did it fail against Saddam Hussein and succeed against Slobadan Milosevic? Although dictators, both leaders operated in fundamentally different political and cultural settings. These differences left Saddam's Ba'athist police state largely invulnerable to coercion and Milosevic's "democratic-authoritarian" regime far more vulnerable. They also provide a rough gauge for planners and analysts to fudge the potential efficacy of aerial coercion against a particular state or regime.

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## INTRODUCTION

The United States fought two major conflicts in the 1990s against Iraq in 1990 and the rump Federal Republic Yugoslavia in 1999. Major air operations, called “strategic air campaigns” by air power enthusiasts, played a major role in the success of Desert Storm and, apparently, the decisive role in Allied Force. As a result of both conflicts, a new term, aerial coercion, has entered the military lexicon to describe the strategic effect desired against an adversary by a major air operation or “campaign.” In short, aerial coercion, using strikes against both strategic targets like national leadership and command and control and operational targets like military forces, seeks to compel an opponent’s national leadership to accept our demands.

Prior to Desert Storm, although clearly the majority of our top civilian and military leadership did not think so, many US Air Force officers, like then Air Force Chief of Staff, General Michael Dugan, and leading air power theorist, Colonel John Warden, believed that a major air operation would alone force Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, to abandon Kuwait.<sup>1</sup> Although air strikes devastated both Iraq’s governmental and economic infrastructure, Integrated Air Defense System (IADS) and a substantial portion of her military forces in the Kuwait Theatre of Operations (KTO), Saddam did not accede to Coalition demands in 38 days of intense aerial bombardment. Instead, the largest US-led ground offensive since World War II finally ejected the Iraqi dictator from Kuwait.

In contrast, the major air operation launched by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1999, Operation Allied Force, apparently compelled Serbian

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, The General’s War (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), 100.

President, Slobodan Milosevic, to accept the organization's demands and withdraw his forces from Kosovo. According to many observers, the aerial attacks on strategic targets, notably the power grid in Belgrade, and, to a lesser degree, operational strikes against the Serbian Third Army in Kosovo convinced the Serbian President to cut his losses and capitulate.<sup>2</sup> While other factors like Serbia's diplomatic isolation and the Russia's refusal to come to her aid may have played a role, the only military force applied was air power to coerce Belgrade's dictator.

Why did aerial coercion fail against Saddam and succeed against Slobadan?

In a geo-strategic context, both strongmen found themselves politically and economically isolated and sanctioned and confronting an alliance and coalition of several nations that sought their withdrawal from a province or country with their major would-be ally, Russia, unwilling or unable to intervene on their behalf. Ostensibly, air operations directed against similar targets from the national leadership to forces in the field should bring the same results. Yet, the air war for Kosovo worked and the air phase of the Gulf War did not. The reason lies at the strategic center of gravity that became the focus for both air operations, the leaders of Serbia and Iraq. Although both monopolized the reigns of power in their respective countries, Saddam and Milosevic operated in fundamentally different political and cultural domestic fabrics. The fundamental characteristics of Saddam's tribal, Sunni Arab, Ba'athist police state made him largely invulnerable to aerial coercion. Where as, those of Slobodan's democratic-authoritarian, ultra-nationalist state left him far more vulnerable. Marked differences existed in the natures of their

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<sup>2</sup> Department of Defense, Report to Congress: Kosovo/Operation Allied Force After-Action Report (Washington, DC: GPO, 2000), 10.

personal power, the role of the military, the opposition to the regime, the people of their respective nations, and the economic circumstances of the their nations.

More than a comparison, these differences suggest a rudimentary analytical construct to assess the viability of a major air operation used to impose our political will on any would-be adversary. By examining the above-listed factors, operational planners and intelligence and area specialists can provide our civilian and military leadership a basis for analysis on whether aerial coercion will likely succeed or fail. Any such framework has become far more relevant today as our political and military leaders increasingly opt for low-risk aerial coercion campaigns in lieu of the potentially more costly and politically sensitive commitment of ground troops to achieve national objectives in limited wars like Kosovo. Moreover, a gauge for potential effectiveness for coercion becomes all the more important as the military as a whole move towards more "effects based" operations characteristic of such war-fighting concepts as "network-centric" warfare.

### **AERIAL COERCION**

Dartmouth Professor Robert Pape and USAF Colonel John Warden serve as aerial coercion's leading analyst and theoretician, respectively. In his book, Bombing to Win, Pape examines the leading theories and premises behind aerial coercion.<sup>3</sup> In his controversial idea of the "Five Rings," Warden, cognizant of the capabilities of modern aircraft, weapons and technology, provides the most modern theoretical take on aerial coercion.

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Pape, Bombing to Win, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996)

## Theories

Professor Pape asserts that to militarily coerce a state, the costs of a state's resistance to achieve a goal, like the annexation of Kuwait, should exceed its relative value to that state and its leadership.<sup>4</sup> In other words, any successful major air operation should inflict enough damage to tip "cost-benefit balance" in the calculation of an enemy nation's leadership. Significantly, he also notes that coercion simply does not work in unlimited wars, like World War II, where national defense of Germany hung in the balance for its people and regime or even in limited ones, like Korea and Vietnam, where the targets in agrarian, underdeveloped nations like North Korea and Vietnam simply did not exist to produce coercion.<sup>5</sup> The author categorizes four major approaches to aerial coercion---punishment, risk, denial and decapitation. Punishment focuses on the enemy's population either through aerial devastation of cities or a state's economic infrastructure. Ultimately, this approach seeks to inflict enough pain on the population to force a nation's people to compel the government to concede or to revolt and overthrow the government. Adjunct to punishment is the risk. Although risk attacks the same targets as punishment, it does so by warning an adversary that strikes will intensify unless he capitulates, creating a cycle of escalation until the final accession to demands by the enemy. Finally, denial involves direct aerial attacks on an adversary's military forces, arms industries, lines of communications and supplies to undermine his military strategy

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 254-256, 346-347, 350-352.

and compel the enemy government's capitulation. Decapitation is a concept developed by Warden.

### **Warden's Five Rings**

Colonel John Warden, largely the father of USAF "strategic air campaign" doctrine, postulates a theory of aerial coercion built on a model of five concentric rings. Warden relates these rings to what he assesses as an enemy's "centers of gravity---or vulnerabilities."<sup>6</sup> The inner ring, a state's political and military leadership, in other words, those empowered to make political concessions, proves the most important to the objective of any major air operation. Warden claims strikes against an adversary's leadership nodes and communications, like Presidential command bunkers in Baghdad, can paralyze the opponent's regime, as the government loses ability to command military and security forces and reach the populace via television and radio, and potentially initiate a virtual "aerial coup" against an unpopular government as dissident groups rise to topple it.<sup>7</sup> This effect, described by Pape and Warden as decapitation, is further magnified against over-centralized, dictatorial regimes like Saddam's or Slobadan's where the ability to command and ultimately capitulate lies in the hands of one man.

The other four rings rank in relative importance on their ability to impact the first. The second most important ring consists of key production facilities in war-related industries, particularly power production and petroleum refining due to their vulnerability and fragility to aerial attacks like Belgrade's and Baghdad's power grids. Destruction of

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<sup>6</sup> John Warden, "Employing Air Power in the Twenty-first Century," in The Future of Air Power in the Aftermath of the Gulf War, eds. Richard Schultz and Robert Pfaltzgraff, Jr. (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 1992), 64.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 65.



power or petroleum production will cause hardship among the civilian population and directly undermine a nation's ability to wage war. Outside production, the state's transportation system---rail lines, bridges, highways, airfields, ports, etc.--- forms the third ring. More difficult to impact due to its size and scale, damaging transportation impedes movement of goods, services, etc. and will degrade the functioning of the state and disrupt both military operations and civilian life. Warden largely discounts the fourth ring, the population and its food sources, due to the moral objections, particularly in limited wars where significant restraints preclude the this option, and the immense task and inherent difficulties of bombing large and numerous cities.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the devastation of the second and third ring will likely have a significant effect on the fourth, the people, due to economic hardship and dislocation that ensues. The final and fifth ring consists of the opponent's military forces. Functioning to protect the four inner rings, its destruction leaves the state defenseless and forces the adversary to accept terms. However, an enemy's armed forces, even with precision-guided weapons, require aircraft to target hundreds of individual weapons systems like tanks and artillery pieces and thousands of dispersed and often dug-in personnel.

### **The "Strategic Air Campaigns:" Instant Thunder and Allied Force**

Warden's "Five Rings" provided a doctrinal foundation for the planning and execution of both major air operations against Iraq and Serbia. Indeed, air power's most ardent advocate developed the initial air operation concept, called Instant Thunder, for Desert Storm that served as the genesis for CENTCOM's actual plan for the air phase of the Gulf War. Against Milosevic and Serbia, his ideas finally found fruition when NATO

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 66,74.

finally allowed Allied Force's Combined Air Force Component Commander (CFACC), USAF Lieutenant General Michael Short, to "go downtown" to Belgrade and attack the power grid, POL sites and bridges, the "vulnerable" second and third rings, around the Serbian capital. With the same doctrinal basis, both sought to coerce a dictator by employing the decapitation, punishment and denial approaches in directly attacking Warden's first, second, third and fifth rings in Iraq and Serbia.

### **Son of Instant Thunder**

Called upon to develop a near-term offensive response to Baghdad in August 1999, Warden created Instant Thunder---an intense six-day, round-the-clock air operation focused on incapacitating Saddam Hussein's regime to persuade him to withdraw from Kuwait or to serve as a catalyst for his overthrow.<sup>9</sup> The plan focused on the first three rings---hitting national command and control sites, telecommunications, power grids, refineries, chemical production facilities, railroads and airfields---in hopes of delivering an aerial coup-de-main. Widely criticized by many in the military for its failure to deal with Iraq's ground forces among other things, the plan, nevertheless provided the initial framework for CENTCOM's air war planner, USAF Brigadier General Buster Glosson, as he developed the major air operation against Iraq.<sup>10</sup>

Incorporating requirement to impact Iraqi ground forces, especially the Republican Guard, the progeny of Instant Thunder envisioned a three-phased air operation prior to any ground offensive. The first phase would gain command of the air by strikes against Baghdad's Kari-based IADS and, although far more intense than

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<sup>9</sup> Gordon and Trainor, 80.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 79-97.

Warden's effort, concentrate on neutralizing Saddam's ability to control the state and its military, destroying military-related industries particularly electric power and oil, disrupting the transportation network and degrading Iraq's Weapon's of Mass Destruction (WMD). The first phase sought to decapitate Saddam Hussein and punish his regime directly and the Iraqi people indirectly by creating economic hardship and disrupting daily life. The second and third phases dealt with the KTO and the Republican Guard. It was classic denial---imposing a goal of 50% attrition goal for all ground systems like tanks, artillery and other armored vehicles and cutting off their resupply and potential retreat by destroying bridges, rail and causeways. Although not the zealous advocate like Warden, Glosson believed the air operation had a chance to persuade Hussein to cut his losses and withdraw. At the very least, air power would turn Desert Storm's ground phase into a "policing up" endeavor as US Army and Marine units mopped up already shattered Iraqi military formations in the KTO.<sup>11</sup>

Launched 38 days before the planned ground offensive, although devastating in terms of the physical destruction wrought on Iraq's infrastructure and military, the air operation did not realize Warden's lofty expectations or Glosson's hopes. Coalition aircraft flew over 100,000 combat sorties, with nearly 30,000 devoted to attacking targets throughout Iraq and the KTO, but failed to compel Saddam's withdrawal.<sup>12</sup> Nearly 840 sorties attacked the national leadership, by striking civilian, military, Ba'ath Party and intelligence headquarters, other command and control nodes and telecommunications sites, but did not paralyze Saddam's ability to control his state or armies in the field.<sup>13</sup> No

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 99.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Hallion, *Storm Over Iraq*, (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 188.

<sup>13</sup> Eliot Cohen and Thomas Kearney, *Revolution in Warfare?: Air Power in the Persian Gulf*, (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1993), 60.

coups or uprisings ensued as a result of aerial bombardment despite how they may have shaken the regime and its party and security apparatus as they found themselves repeatedly targeted. Strikes on the second ring reduced power production and oil refining capacity to 12% and 10% of pre-war levels, respectively.<sup>14</sup> While quite likely having a significant impact on military operations, bombing failed also to indirectly punish the populace enough to persuade them to move them against Baghdad's dictator despite disrupting essential services like lights, refrigeration, medical care, sewage, etc.

Beyond "strategic" air strikes that failed to decapitate the government or inflict sufficient punishment on the government or Iraqi people, the vast majority of ground attack sorties concentrated on undermining Iraq's military strategy---the defense of Kuwait. Again, Coalition efforts again did not succeed. Strikes against Iraq's transportation network focused on interdicting supplies to the Republican Guard and regular army forces in Kuwait and southern Iraq and cutting their means of retreat. Coalition aircraft dropped 46 bridges, nearly half of all highway bridges and all nine rail bridges required to logistically support the KTO.<sup>15</sup> However, their efforts failed to isolate the theatre or fundamentally undermine Baghdad's defense logistically or to block the retreat of its forces, most importantly the Republican Guard. Direct attacks on Saddam's military units fell short of their 50% attrition goal of major combat systems, reaching a rate somewhere between 20% and 40%.<sup>16</sup> While heavy aerial bombardment demoralized front-line infantry units, causing large desertions, and decimated the Iraqi III Corps as the premier regular army formation attempted a spoiling attack to prematurely begin the

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 63,65.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 81.

<sup>16</sup> Pape, 249. Significant controversy exists. The Central Intelligence Agency , Army and Marines post-war surveys say 20%. USAF and CENTCOM numbers claim approximately 40%.

ground war, the Republican Guard, despite significant losses, remained to fight and, ultimately, did not convince Saddam that his military strategy stood in jeopardy until faced with a multi-corps ground operation that burst not only Kuwait, but southern Iraq.

### **Allied Force**

In stark contrast to the duration and intensity of the air operation planned by CENTCOM, the initial NATO plans for Allied Force called for attacking only 91 targets for a few days.<sup>17</sup> Most European Alliance members believed that Milosevic, faced with a demonstration of NATO's resolve via a few bombs, would crack and agree to their demands and withdraw his army and police from Kosovo.<sup>18</sup> Although the initial plan included a few strategic targets like POL storage sites, it concentrated on the rump Yugoslavia's army and police forces in the disputed province as certain European NATO members forbade any attacks against Belgrade, the heart of Serbian strongman's regime.<sup>19</sup> In short, it violated nearly all Warden's cardinal principles and abandoned the decapitation approach, made punishment an afterthought and concentrated on the most difficult approach to execute---denial---given the poor weather and the rugged and forested terrain along with the dispersal of Serbia's 40,000 man Third Army and paramilitary police over several hundred square miles in the Kosovo proper.

On 24 March 1999, Allied Force began and, instead of capitulation, Milosevic launched "Operation Horseshoe" an attempt to drive all ethnic Albanians from Kosovo (90% of the population) creating over a million refugees streaming to the borders of

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<sup>17</sup> Lt. Gen. Michael Short, USAF (ret.), "Operation Allied Force," Lecture given at the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, RI, 11 January 2000.

<sup>18</sup> Paul C. Strickland, "USAF Aerospace Power Doctrine: Decisive or Coercive?," Air Power Journal Vol. XIV, No.3 (Fall 2000), 20.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 22-23.

Albania and Macedonia. Faced with their initial failure, a massive refugee crisis and the Serbian President's recalcitrance, NATO and its military arm under Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), General Wesley Clark, gradually escalated the operation, using unintentionally a risk approach as Allied aircraft slowly escalated their strikes against Wardens's first three rings---national leadership, arms-related industries and transportation. The CFACC, LTG Michael Short, found himself at loggerheads with Clark, who remained focused on the Third Army in Kosovo, and NATO political sensitivities as Alliance national leaders vetted targets. Short sought to apply Warden's "strategic air" doctrine and go all out against what he saw as a "more compelling target set"---Belgrade and its power stations and bridges---to directly punish Milosevic and indirectly the Serbian people.<sup>20</sup> Alliance leaders and Clark slowly relented to Short's views. By late May, NATO aircraft began heavy strikes around the Serbian capital against power stations, refineries, bridges and industry. With economic devastation mounting, no electric power, little fuel and internal dissent growing as a result of the intensified strikes, the Serbian President conceded in early June.

Lasting 78 days, Allied aircraft flew over 30,000 sorties with more than 7,000 ground attack sorties.<sup>21</sup> Although haphazardly planned in execution due to important political constraints, namely Alliance solidarity, Allied Force eventually succeeded when it turned to Warden's inner rings. Principally at the end of the operation, NATO struck at the leadership directly by destroying or damaging five "Presidential" residences, Special Police headquarters, the Ministry of Defense and Interior main complexes and dual-use (military-civilian) industry owned by some of Milosevic's key supporters among the Serb

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<sup>20</sup> John Tirpak, "Short's View of the Air Campaign," Air Force Magazine, September 1999.

<sup>21</sup> Wesley Clark, "The United States and NATO: They Way Ahead," Parameters (Winter 1999-2000), 9.

elite.<sup>22</sup> Alliance aircraft reduced television and radio broadcasting to 35% of pre-war capacity, attenuating the Serb autocrat's principal connection to his fellow countrymen.<sup>23</sup> More importantly, later NATO aerial attacks shut down 80% of the power in FRY at any one time, destroyed or damaged all oil refineries, reduced petroleum reserves by 57%, and dropped nearly all bridges over the Danube.<sup>24</sup> Overall, Allied Force caused an estimated 30\$ billion in damage to the FRY infrastructure, crippling an already strapped economy. These attacks clearly affected not only the Serb elite, but the people as a whole as popular demonstrations and disenchantment grew among Milosevic's own supporters over the ruin brought to Serbia by his policies. In the end, the punishment approach proved highly effective in compelling Slobadan to accept NATO demands. In contrast, denial, the principal locus of NATO efforts due to the necessity to maintain Alliance cohesion and Clark's fixation with the Third Army, proved likely far less effective. Despite NATO claims of a nearly a 40% attrition rate among tanks, armored vehicles and artillery pieces, 974 in total, in the FRY's Third Army, a post-war survey reportedly only found 46 destroyed Serb tanks, armored vehicles and artillery pieces in Kosovo.<sup>25</sup> Beyond the battle damage assessment, intelligence and targeting concerns, this discrepancy, raises serious questions about the effectiveness of NATO strikes and initial denial approach in the wooded, hilly province with bad weather.

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<sup>22</sup> Short Lecture

<sup>23</sup> John Tirpak, "Victory in Kosovo," Air Force Magazine, July 1999.

<sup>24</sup> Department of Defense, 82.

<sup>25</sup> Richard Newman, "The Bombs That Failed in Kosovo," U.S. News and World Report, 20 September 1999, 29.

## **Aerial Coercion: Means of Comparison for Slobodan and Saddam**

Why had coercion failed against Iraq and not Serbia? As noted in the introduction, the different political and cultural frameworks of Iraq and the FRY under both dictators played the decisive role, leaving one, Saddam, largely invulnerable and the other, Milosevic, far more susceptible. The factors that illustrate their relative vulnerabilities to coercion include: the nature of Saddam's and Slobodan's personal power and how they exercise political power, the role of the military, the opposition to the regime, the people of nation and their relation to the state and, finally, the economics of the state. The following questions best illustrate those factors and provide a means to assess the potential efficacy of aerial coercion:

- 1. What is the nature and source of the regime's political power?** Can you "decapitate," paralyze or weaken the regime or "punish" it directly or its elites to achieve coercion?
- 2. What is the role of the military in the state and the current conflict?** Can a major air operation "deny" the regime's military strategy or cause a military coup?
- 3. Do significant opposition groups or rivals exist to the regime?** Can an air operation create the conditions to cause a coup or rebellion?
- 4. Is the regime accountable to the people of the state?** Can you punish the people indirectly via an air operation to cause them to compel the regime to capitulate?
- 5. Can the Political and Economic Costs Outweigh the Benefits For the Regime?**



## **1. Nature and Source of the Regime's Political Power: Will Decapitation and**

**Direct Punishment Against the Regime and Its Elites Work?** In both cases, decapitation, or an "aerial coup" proved highly unlikely sans a lucky bomb killing Saddam or Slobodan at a command and control bunker or Presidential residence. Likewise, direct attacks to punish Saddam or his henchmen had little effect due to the pervasiveness of his absolute rule of a one-party, police state from Baghdad to every village in Iraq. It is simply not possible to have the "target effects" needed by decapitation or even punishment not only on the myriad of formal institutions of control and repression and the informal, but strong "blood ties" of family, tribe and religious sect used by Saddam to dominate Iraq.<sup>26</sup> In the "Republic of Fear," the destruction of command and control bunkers, Ba'ath Party headquarters or the Ministry of Defense, could achieve little when the fear of Saddam exceeded any the damage wrought by any aerial attacks.

In contrast, Allied Force apparently did weaken Milosevic's "democratic-authoritarian" regime by directly punishing the elites through attacks on their commercial interests and disrupting his principal link to his fellow Serbs, his state-controlled broadcasting network.<sup>27</sup> However authoritarian, Milosevic's regime pales in comparison to Saddam's police state. Unlike his Iraqi counterpart, he does not command a party that administers every hamlet in Serbia, four separate and competing intelligence services or a Praetorian Guard like the Republic Guard. Instead, Belgrade's President must work through the institutions of the state and his Socialist Party that does not constitute the

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<sup>26</sup> Kannah Makiya, Republic of Fear (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998).

<sup>27</sup> Tirpak, "Victory in Kosovo," 4.

state itself like the Ba'ath.<sup>28</sup> His tools are not blood ties, torture and murder, but patronage via the dispensing of positions and wealth and the manipulation of elections and issues like Serbian nationalism.<sup>29</sup> When his clients lost millions due to air attacks and his policy in Kosovo brought economic and political ruin in the nation as a whole, Milosevic's rule suffered as he began to lose their support.<sup>30</sup> Although Slobadan used intimidation and beatings by his one principal institution of repression the Serbian Special Police, politics in Serbia is not a zero sum game where physical survival is a stake like Iraq. The only Serb's political survival at stake in Kosovo was Slobodan's. When his survival hung in the balance, he capitulated.

**2. The Military's Role: Will Denial Work or Punishment Cause a Coup?** In many ways denial next to decapitation proved the hardest approach to execute against Iraq and Serbia. The sheer magnitude of the task in the KTO with several thousand dug-in combat systems and personnel and its difficulty in Kosovo due the dispersal of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army and Serb paramilitary police in rugged, forested terrain covered with bad weather, apparently prevented its success. The controversy over both Iraqi and Serb losses only highlighted the dubiousness of this approach working in either case. Despite significant damage to both countries transportation networks and military infrastructure like POL and ammunition sites, neither really significantly undermined the military strategies of Saddam or Milosevic---the defense of Kuwait and the ethnic cleansing of Kosovo.

The effect of punishing the military to cause its move against the regime offered very little hope in Iraq. A large measure of Saddam's longevity in power came from his

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<sup>28</sup> Robert Thomas, The Politics of Serbia in the 1990s, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 422.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 423.

<sup>30</sup> Short Lecture

ability to prevent military coups, the principal means of regime change prior to the ascent of the Ba'ath Party to power in 1968.<sup>31</sup> Like the former Soviet Communist Party, the Ba'ath had political officers at every unit down to brigade and, in some cases, battalion level.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, Saddam possessed a powerful check, the Republican Guard, composed primarily of his fellow Tikritis and tribal allies, to prevent any further military adventures in Iraqi politics.

In contrast, NATO's aerial punishment of the FRY's armed forces and, perhaps more importantly, its inability to defend the Serb nation against Allied Force or inflict any casualties on the Alliance resulted in an apparent disillusionment with Milosevic. Whether he feared a coup remains at best uncertain, but the number of desertions and the failure of many annual conscripts to report raised uncertainties.<sup>33</sup> Unlike Saddam, Milosevic did not have any powerful organizational checks on the armed forces. At best, he placed a few men who support him among in top positions and had some support among younger officers among its ranks. Additionally, he had also cut the regular armed force's budget in favor the Serb Special Police's paramilitary, a force he trusted far more.<sup>34</sup> Significantly, in 2000, when Milosevic fell, the army stood by and watched.

**3. Opposition Groups or Rivals: Will Direct/Indirect Punishment Cause a Coup from Within The Regime or Indirect Punishment Unrest or a Popular Rebellion?** Either Slobodan or Saddam had any major rivals within their regimes. As noted above, Baghdad's dictator relies heavily on his family and fellow tribesmen to fill

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<sup>31</sup> Makiya, 214.

<sup>32</sup> Anthony Cordesman and Ahmed Hashim, Iraq Sanctions and Beyond (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 50.

<sup>33</sup> Tim Judah, Kosovo: War and Revenge (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 284.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas, 423.

the upper echelons of power. His three half-brothers and first cousins, like Watban al-Takriti, Hussein Kamel and Ali Hasan al-Majid, among others, headed the intelligence organizations, commanded the Republican Guard or held the Defense Portfolio. Saddam also regularly moved family members around to prevent their development of their own personal fiefdoms from which to challenge him. Milosevic relied on supporters he placed throughout the institutions of the state. They owed him their positions and privileges. His "clients" and benefited financially from corruption or government contracts in which they owned interests.<sup>35</sup> Milosevic also dismissed people the top ranks that opposed his policies or head organizations that could have represented a threat. In fact just prior to Allied Force, he removed both the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces and the Interior Minister who took stands against his impending actions in Kosovo.<sup>36</sup>

Outside the respective regimes, potential opponents existed. However, they operated in radically different frameworks that left a rebellion or unrest in Iraq highly unlikely via air strikes that could do little weaken the regime or means of repression, but one in Serbia more probable. A one-party police state, Iraq has no formal opposition, but has sharp ethnic and sectarian divisions suppressed easily as long the state and its instruments of repression remain intact. These divisions did spark uprisings among the Shia Arabs in the South and Kurds in the North after the war only because of the power vacuum created by US ground forces occupying southern Iraq and their mistaken belief that those forces would assist them in their attempts to depose Saddam. Aerial bombardment of Ba'ath Party headquarters, telecommunications, or the Republican Guard played little if any role in creating that vacuum.

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<sup>35</sup> Thomas, 423.

<sup>36</sup> Judah, 221.

Unlike Iraq, Serbia had formal opposition parties to serve as a catalyst for unrest against the regime and who had organized large, popular demonstrations against Milosevic in 1991, 1993, 1996 and 1997.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, their support base lay principally in Serbia's major cities, especially Belgrade. During the latter stages of the war, indirect punishment against the population and particularly the Serbian capital's residents allowed them to act as agents of unrest. However, the opposition proved unable to form a coalition among its desperate parties and lacked a viable or credible candidate to rally popular support to unseat Milosevic.

**4. Regime Accountability to the People: Will Indirect Punishment of the People Cause Them to Compel The Regime to Capitulate?** While Saddam Hussein, as unquestioned head of a police state, is clearly not accountable to the sharply divided Iraqi people, Milosevic was to his fellow Serbs. As a result, indirect punishment, via the disruption of daily life and economic devastation, worked against Belgrade and not Baghdad. The past 10 years of sanctions against Iraq that have produced severe economic and personal hardships for the vast majority of Iraqi people without any major popular unrest against the regime, provide testament to ineffectiveness of indirect punishment of a population in a police state. More democratic Serbia provides a quite different example. Unlike his Iraqi counterpart who held periodic referendums on his Presidency in which 99.9% of the electorate voted yes to Saddam remaining as President, Milosevic and his party stood parliamentary elections against opposition parties starting in 1990. In turn, the Serbian Parliament elected the President. In the course of these elections, the Serb leader clearly used his supporters among the judiciary nullify or manipulate results, sparking

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<sup>37</sup> Eric Gordy, 'Why Milosevic Still?,' Current History Vol. 99, no. 635 (March 2000): 99.

protests and unrest. Even then, in the last election prior to Kosovo, the Socialist Party in coalition with ultra-nationalist Serbian parties barely maintained a parliamentary majority despite their bureaucratic maneuvers.<sup>38</sup> Additionally, in 1996, when compelled by protests, Milosevic backed down and allowed opposition victories stand in several major mayoral races in two large Serbian cities.<sup>39</sup> Most importantly, after the Dayton Accords, his popular support, primarily based in rural and southern Serbia, began to erode over his misadventures in Bosnia and the worsening economic conditions of the state. In the face of the increasing economic devastation caused by NATO bombs and the resulting unrest among his electorate, he had to capitulate to maintain what popular support he already had. Elections in 2000 and the popular groundswell that ousted him after he attempted again to alter the results, demonstrated not only his accountability to the Serb people, but that he waited too late in 1999.

**5. Can the Political and Economic Costs Outweigh the Benefits For the Regime?** While Saddam never had to weigh the impact of the air operation on his survival, Milosevic did. Consequently, coercion failed against Iraq's dictator and succeeded against Serbia's. In a strategic gamble, Iraq's absolute ruler had annexed Kuwait to provide the economic and political muscle at a stroke to realize his ambitions of Persian Gulf hegemony instead of waiting several years to rebuild an already war-torn economy. Firmly ensconced in his police state, the losses inflicted by a major air operation mattered little to Baghdad's dictator in a country still suffering from the eight-year Iran-Iraq War and an \$80 billion dollar international debt. Even without Kuwait,

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 102.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 100.

Iraq possessed the extensive economic resources---10% of the world's oil---to rebuild. In contrast, Allied Force endangered Milosevic's political position. He launched the operation in Kosovo to divert his people's attention away from their economy staggering under international sanctions to the plight of Kosovar Serbs and Serb nationalism. The Serbian President needed to bolster his support both among the ranks of the regime and the people to stop the erosion of this power brought by the disappointment with the Dayton Accords and Rambouillet. Ironically, Kosovo triggered just the opposite effect with the onset of NATO's air operation and the unrest caused by the more than \$30 billion dollars damage it wrought on Serbia---1 ½ times the FRY's annual GDP.<sup>40</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In theory, aerial coercion, using the same targets sets to create punishment, denial or decapitation should prove as effective against Saddam Hussein as Slobodan Milosevic. It did not. Punishment, direct or indirect, of the regime, the elites or the population simply does not work against a police state like Iraq with multiple institutions of repression spread throughout the country from the capital to smallest village. Politics in Iraq was and is a zero-sum game for survival. The punishment brought by aerial bombs did not overcome the fear of Saddam and his regime where any dissent or unrest resulted in torture and death. Nor can you decapitate a dictator who not only relied on command and control nodes and communications links, but the primordial ties of family and tribe to ensure his absolute rule. Saddam was and is accountable to no one but himself.

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<sup>40</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, World Factbook 2001 (Washington, DC: GPO, 2000), 106.

In contrast, Slobodan proved a far more democratic, and, consequently, weaker dictator, vulnerable to coercion. Punishment worked against the Serbia strongman, because the elites and people could hold Milosevic accountable for the damage brought by NATO airplanes. Although an authoritarian ruler who used intimidation and beatings against his fellow Serbs, Milosevic still had to maintain some level of popular support to stand elections. He still had to face opponents, however divided, that sought to exploit the hardships caused by the bombings to cause unrest against the regime. Moreover, Serbia had one principal institution of repression, the Serb Special Police, not five or six like Iraq. Decapitation, sans a bomb that could have killed Milosevic, simply did not work. Denial proved a nearly impossible task against the Third Army and paramilitary police spread throughout the province of Kosovo.

The comparison of Saddam and Slobodan provides some insights on how to judge the potential efficacy of aerial coercion against a government or regime. The questions on the nature of the political power in the regime, the role of the military, accountability of the regime to the people and elites, opposition and rivals and the final cost benefit analysis by the leader, provide a start for any analysis. As politicians-increasing opt for aerospace power as the preferred instrument of military power, planners and area and intelligence specialists must provide them with accurate assessments on what it can and cannot do against politically and culturally diverse adversaries.



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